Nations seemed a poor substitute for old-time equilibrium maintained by the balance of the strengths of the Great Powers. The new haphazard boundaries crisscrossing what had been Austria-Hungary and Turkey were so many scars on these parts of Europe and the Middle East, but the psychological wounds were deeper than new political boundaries and economic injuries. The air was full of hysterical nationalism, hatred, suspicion, and fear. New ideologies—Fascism and Communism—thrived in this poisoned air, and their struggle for the heritage of old Europe was the main theme of the historical drama.

The events that unfolded before my eyes in those years remain engraved in my memory, as a continuation and aftermath of the Russian revolution.

ITALY AFTER A FUTILE VICTORY

The immediate task of our mission in Rome was to gain the interest of the Italian government and business circles in developing Georgia's resources, especially her coal, manganese, and forests. Jordania and his friends believed that if Italy were to be the first of the European nations to start business with Georgia, she would support the claim of Georgian independence. We were racing against time to obtain an international guarantee of Georgia's independence before Russia overran Transcaucasia.

Rome revealed itself to us in all its splendor under the dazzling sun of early autumn. The crowds in the streets were cheerful and lively. Smart military uniforms with lots of decorations—battle and campaign medals, service ribbons, and insignia of all kinds—added bright colors to the crowd, but the uniformed men did not look very martial. Both the officers and men cursed the government and the parliament and accused them of cowardice, weakness, and venality. Their most hated enemies were the Socialists, but they suspected that the Liberals were not much better. The dragon's teeth planted by the war were beginning to sprout.

On the day on which the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tittoni, had invited our mission to a reception, the newspapers carried sensational headlines. D'Annunzio, the famous bard of Italian nationalism, had led some soldiers and a crowd of armed volunteers into Fiume (Rjecka), a Croatian port across the Italian border then occupied jointly by the Allies. Italian troops and sailors in the port joined d'Annunzio's forces, proclaiming the city's annexation to Italy.

At the Ministry we were received by the Undersecretary, Count Sforza. The reception room was furnished with old tapestries, a carved mahogany table, and gilded leather armchairs—exquisite museum